

swamps of North Carolina” and boarded a northbound train. Once onboard the train, he was met by Red Shirts who threatened him. Kirk met attorney William A. Moore, another Wilmington black evacuee. Moore had planned to get off the train at Wilson but was forced back on the train. Kirk claimed that he distracted the Red Shirts outside of Wilson and that Moore was able to jump from the train and was not found. Although Kirk had planned to get off the train at Weldon, he evaded the Red Shirts at the Rocky Mount stop, secured a horse, and rode all night to Whitakers where he boarded a “freight” to Petersburg. Kirk later wrote that many of the city’s ministers were “exiled and scattered over the country from our pulpits and our people, without having time to get our property or our money or any other means of protection for our families.” He also observed the power of the network developed by the Democrats to control every facet of North Carolina life. He explained that his ordeal in leaving the state showed the “complete organic strength of this most regretful and dreadful movement going on in North Carolina. The telegraph, the telephone and even it seems the very railroad train knows how to move against the Negro.”⁴⁵

Kirk and Dancy exemplified the mass exodus out of the city that followed the riot. During the riot, untold numbers of men, women, and children fled the city to hide in the swamps and cemeteries for their immediate safety. Once the bullet fire stopped, African American residents of the city were hesitant to return to their homes. Despite promises of safety conveyed by

white and black leaders, many did not return to the city, choosing instead live in other towns and cities. The papers noted, however, by two days after the riot, “negroes who fled to the woods in droves Thursday and have since been in hiding are coming back into town, many of them in a famished condition,” while others were leaving the city “loaded with packs and bundles, fleeing in the darkness to make their home elsewhere.” It is unknown how many people fled the city, and, of that number, how many returned to the city permanently.⁴⁶

The banishment campaign effectively removed political leaders and others equipped to counter claims of Democrats regarding municipal mismanagement or dire circumstances facing the city’s whites. Further, men “obnoxious” to white Democrats through economic or political success were expelled, as well as Robert Bunting’s African American wife and other black women “who have been talking too much.”⁴⁷

For whites, the banishment campaign had its costs. The new city leaders had to address the financial burden of the

⁴⁵ William A. Moore is listed in the 1897 *City Directory* as an attorney with offices at the corner of Market and Second Streets. His home is given as 413 South Seventh Street. Moore is not listed in the 1900 directory. Attorney William A. Moore addressed the city’s African American Spanish-American War recruits in the summer of 1898. Kirk, *Statement of Facts*, 9-16; Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle*, 341.

⁴⁶ A study of the census and city directories might illustrate a change in the city’s population over time. A time consuming study, it would perhaps demonstrate the change in the city’s population and provide proof that many of the blacks who called Wilmington home in 1910 came to the city after the riot and that those who lived in the city before November 10th moved away. *Morning Star* (Wilmington), November 13, 15, 1898; *Wilmington Messenger*, November 13, 1898; *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), November 12, 1898; *News and Observer* (Raleigh), November 13, 1898.

⁴⁷ Frank Toomer, a black policeman who fled to New Bern during the violence wrote Waddell to ask if he could safely return to the city. Waddell replied that he thought Toomer should not return because he had “made himself very obnoxious to many people.” Toomer’s request and Waddell’s reply were printed in the papers. *Morning Star* (Wilmington), November 19, 1898; *News and Observer* (Raleigh), November 12, 1898.